

Dear Members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee,

I write to you as a taxpayer, proud parent of two Ohio teachers, and public-school board member deeply concerned about the state budget and funding priorities.

The proposed \$600 million bond package for a new Cleveland Browns stadium in Brook Park is a discretionary “want.” In contrast, the \$666 million required to fully implement the Fair School Funding Plan (FSFP) is a critical “need.”

As a taxpayer, I am unwilling to shoulder the burden of repaying a \$600 million bond—with long-term interest—for a project that offers no tangible benefit to my family or community. However, fully funding the FSFP directly benefits Ohio families and communities by ensuring access to quality education and reducing reliance on local property taxes.

As a school board member, I can assure you that public schools are committed to responsible stewardship of state funds. We are held to the highest standards of accountability and transparency—standards that, unfortunately, do not apply to the private schools now set to receive \$500 million in public funds under HB96.

Public dollars should serve public needs: education, libraries, infrastructure, and safety services—services that are subject to voter decision and input. I was never asked to vote on funding private education. Choosing a private school is a personal decision, not a public obligation.

As stated in the Ohio Constitution, Article VI, Section 2, you are obligated to “secure this system through taxation or other means, with the provision that no religious or other sect shall have exclusive control over any part of the school funds.”

Furthermore, and just as important, taxpayer subsidies for private education undermine public schools and violate the state constitution by enabling discrimination based on ability, gender, religion, income, or other factors.

The Fair School Funding Plan, enacted in 2021 through HB110 and extended through HB33, was a bipartisan commitment to a more equitable funding system. Its three guarantees—Formula Transition Aid, Supplemental Targeted Assistance, and the Formula Transition Supplement—were designed to protect districts from funding losses and support long-term stability.

Yet the current budget proposal allocates only \$226 million for the FSFP—less than half of what is needed—while \$500 million (almost double!) is allocated for private school vouchers. This disproportionate appropriation harms every public school district in Ohio, breaking the promise made to our children and communities.

Additionally, HB96 introduces provisions that would cap school district reserves at 30% of the prior year’s spending and empower county budget commissions to suspend voter-approved property tax levies to meet that cap. These measures pose a significant threat to local control and threatens future tax growth for our district.

Public education is not just a line item in a budget—it is the foundation of a strong, sustainable future for Ohio. I urge you to reject funding priorities that favor entertainment and privatization over public education, and to honor your commitment to fully fund the Fair School Funding Plan.

Respectfully,
Karen A. Mayfield, Vice President
Washington Local Board of Education
Toledo, Ohio